

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

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P R 290750Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5034

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

S E C R E T DACCA 5462

EXDIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PK, BG

SUBJECT: PAK-BANGLADESH RELATIONS

REF: DACCA 5316; STATE 252256

1. FOREIGN MINISTER KAMAL HOSSAIN CALLED ME IN NOVEMBER 28 TO GIVE ME HIS CONSIDERED REACTIION TO YOUR REPORT ON YOUR DISCUSSION OF BANGLADESH-PAKISTAN RELATIONS WITH BHUTTO. HE SAID THAT FURTHER REFLECTION HAD BORNE OUT HIS PRELIMINARY IMPRESSION THAT PAKISTAN'S POSITION HAD NOT CHANGED. ONE HAD TO LOOK AT BHUTTO'S STATEMENT IN THAT CONTEXT OF WHAT HAD BEEN SAID DURING BHUTTO'S VISIT TO DACCA WHEN BDG HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT THERE MUST BE A PRIOR POLITICAL DECISION ON JUST APPORTIONMENT OF ASSETS BEFORE REFERRING THIS ISSUE TO A JOINT COMMISSION, WITH THE SUGGESTION THAT PAKISTAN ALSO MAKE, AS A GESTURE, A TOKEN PAYMENT OUT OF READILY QUANTIFIABLE ASSETS. HE SAID HE APPRECIATED THE HELPFUL INTEREST WE HAD ALWAYS SHOWN IN SOLUTION OF PROBLEMS ON SUBCONTINENT, BUT HE WAS FORCED TO CONCLUDE THAT PAKISTAN HAD NOT CHANGED ITS ATTITUDE ON THE TWO KEY ISSUES--ASSETS AND REPATRIATION. (I ASKED IT THERE HAD BEEN ANY DEVELOPMENT ON THE REPATRIATION OF THE 4,000 BIHARIS SINCE WE LAST SPOKE, AND HE SAID THERE HAD NOT.)

2. I COMMENTED THAT THE ELEMENT IN BHUTTO'S POSITION

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WHICH HAD SEEMED TO OFFER MODEST ENCOURAGEMENT WAS HIS

WILLINGNESS TO SET A TIME LIMIT ON WORK OF JOINT COMMISSION, WHICH WOULD ENABLE BDG TO DISCOVER WITHIN A REASONABLE TIME WHETHER PROGRESS MIGHT BE MADE IN THE COMMISSION. KAMAL HOSSAIN SAID HE THOUGHT THE DANGER WAS THAT, IF THE TALKS FAILED, THEY WOULD BE WORSE OFF THAN BEFORE. THEY DID NOT OPPOSE THE IDEA OF A JOINT COMMISSION--INDEED THEY HAD ALWAYS ASSUME IT WOULD BE AN ELEMENT IN THE PROCESS, BUT ALWAYS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF A PRIOR POLITICAL DECISION.

3. HE THEN GAVE ME A PAPER WITH THE FOLLOWING TEXT SUMMARIZING HIS POSITION, EXPLAINING THAT THE PAPER WAS NOT A FORMAL ONE BUT THAT HE WAS PROVIDING IT IN THE INTEREST OF PRECISION. BEGIN QUOTE. PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO'S REACTION ON OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS WITH BANGLADESH IS DISAPPOINTING. THE SUGGESTION OF A JOINT-FACT FINDING COMMITTEE" WITHOUT PRIOR AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE ON APPORTIONMENT, IN PARTICULAR WITH REGARD TO EASILY QUANTIFIABLE ASSETS, IS NOT INDICATIVE OF FLEXIBILITY BUT SEEMS TO BE A MERE REITERATION OF PAKISTAN'S EARLIER STAND. DURING HIS VISIT TO DACCA IN JUNE THIS YEAR WE HAD INDICATED TO MR. BHUTTO THAT WHEREAS WE WERE NOT OPPOSED TO THE IDEA OF A JOINT COMMITTEE, WE STRONGLY FELT THAT SUCH A COMMITTEE COULD NOT ACHIEVE ANY POSITIVE RESULT AND IN FACT WAS LIKELY TO BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE, UNLESS IT WAS PRECEDED BY A POLITICAL DECISION ON APPORTIONMENT.

QTE. MR. BHUTTO CONTINUES TO REMAIN SILENT ON THE HUMANITARIAN QUESTION OF REPATRIATION OF NON-BANGALEES FROM BANGLADESH TO PAKISTAN IN MANIFEST DISREGARD OF THE OBLIGATION UNDERTAKEN IN THE DELHI AGREEMENT ON 28TH AUGUST, 1973 WITH REGARD TO THIS MATTER.

QTE. BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT REITERATES ITS PRINCIPLED POSITION THAT IT IS PREPARED FOR TALKS ON ALL OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS AT AN APPROPRIATE LEVEL. END QUOTE.

4. I INQUIRED HOW THE FOREIGN MINISTER MIGHT SEE PROGRESS COMING ABOUT IN THIS MATTER IF BHUTTO' APPROACH WERE NOT TO BE FOLLOWED. HE SAID THAT BDG HAD MADE IT CLEAR IN ITS SECRET

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PUBLIC STATEMENTS, IN WHAT IT HAD SAID TO ITS FRIENDS, AND EVEN IN WHAT IT HAD SAID DIRECTLY TO THE PAKISTANIS, THAT THEY WERE READY TO MOVE AHEAD AND WERE PREPARED TO TALK WITH PAKISTAN AT AN APPROPRIATE LEVEL. PAKISTAN KNEW THEIR POSITON ON THE KEY ISSUES AND IT WAS NOW UP TO THEM.

5. I ASKED KAMAL HOSSAIN IF HE WOULD OBJECT IF YOU CON-

VEYED HIS RESPONSE TO PAKISTAN GOVERNMENT, AND HE SAID HE
WOULD NOT OBJECT.

6. COMMENT. I ASSUME THAT KAMAL HOSSAIN USED THE INTERIM
BETWEEN THE RECEIPT OF YOUR REPORT AND HIS REPLY TO
IT YESTERDAY TO CONSULT MUJIB. HIS RESPONSE REFLECTS
MUJIB'S STRONG FEELING THAT HE IS THE UNJURED PARTY WITH
RESPECT TO PAKISTAN, HIS BELIEF THAT HE HAS WALKED THE
FIRST MILE BY RELEASING THE PRINSONERS, AND HIS CONSEQUENT
BELIEF THAT THE NEXT CONCESSION SHOULD COME FROM PAKISTAN.
FIRMNESS OF KAMAL HOSSAIN'S STANCE MAY ALSO REFLECT THEIR
DISAPPOINTMENT THAT BHUTTO SAID NOTHING ABOUT REPATRIATION,
AN ISSUE WHICH BDG UNDOUBLTEDLY FEELS IS AND EASIER ONE FOR
PAKISTAN TO HELP RESOLVE.
BOSTER

NOTE BY OCT: EXDIS ADDED PER SSO - MS. MATTESON.

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ASSETS, LIABILITIES, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 NOV 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974DACCA05462
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740346-0461
From: DACCA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t1974114/aaaaacug.tel
Line Count: 132
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: DACCA 5316; STATE 252256
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 AUG 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <26 DEC 2002 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PAK-BANGLADESH RELATIONS
TAGS: PFOR, PK, BG
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005